employed for switching the refrigerant circuit between a cooling operation and a warming operation. When the air conditioner cools the passenger compartment, the controller supplies no electric current to the electromagnetic coil of the first valve mechanism such that the first valve mechanism is open. Accordingly, the first passage is connected to the second passage, and the refrigerant discharged by the compressor flows to the condenser via the first passage and the second passage. When the air conditioner warms the passenger compartment, the controller supplies electric current to the electromagnetic coil of the first valve mechanism such that the first valve mechanism is closed. Accordingly, the first passage is disconnected from the second passage. In this state, as long as the pressure difference between the first passage and the second passage is smaller than a predetermined value, the second valve mechanism is closed, and the first passage is also disconnected from the third passage. After some time has elapsed and the pressure difference between the first passage and the second passage is larger than the predetermined value, the second valve mechanism is open, and the first passage is connected with the third passage. Therefore, the refrigerant discharged by the compressor flows to the evaporator through the depressurizing device via the first passage and the third passage. These features effect the advantages as recited in the specification, such as those set forth on page 15, line 34 through page 16, line 12.

Turning now to the rejections on art, claims 1-3 and 11-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,299,592 to Swanson (Swanson). The Office Action also rejects claims 8-10 under 35 U.S.C.§103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,270,726 to Hertfelder *et al.* (Hertfelder) in view of Swanson.

Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 is not taught or suggested by Swanson, individually or in combination with any other reference cited in the Office Action. In particular, Applicant notes that claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the second valve mechanism selectively connects and disconnects the first passage

with the third passage in accordance with the difference between the pressure in the first passage and the pressure in the second passage when the first valve mechanism is closed. In stark contrast, Swanson merely teaches an electrically operated valve that has means for relieving extremely high pressures to prevent the valve body from bursting. Accordingly, the disclosure of Swanson is limited to a relief valve 70 that opens in response to excess pressure when the electromagnetic valve 30 is open and the passage 20 is connected with the passage 38 to supply water. Therefore, Swanson does not disclose a valve mechanism that corresponds to the second valve mechanism as recited by claim 1. For the foregoing reasons, claim 1 is believed to be patentable over Swanson, and in condition for allowance. Claims 2-3 and 8-12 are also believed to allowable because of their dependence upon allowable claim 1, and because they recite features not taught or suggested by the prior art.

Applicant has made every effort to present claims which distinguish over the prior art, and it is believed that all claims are in condition for allowance. Nevertheless, Applicant invites the Examiner to call the undersigned if it is believed that a telephonic interview would expedite the prosecution of the application to an allowance. In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,

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